



an independent force for a better Bristol

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018

### **1 - 3 Ashton Road (The Old Brewery) - 18/04367/F**

The Society's response to the public consultation to this planning application

#### **1. The proposal**

The Old Brewery MCC LLP proposes to part demolish the existing buildings to provide a mixed-use development comprising 94 new homes, office and flexible commercial space with associated car parking, servicing, landscaping works and infrastructure.

#### **2. Summary**

The Society is grateful to Change Real Estate and their development team for the opportunities that they have given to the Society to respond to the evolution of the current scheme. This response is based on the documents filed to support the planning application and a site visit. The Society particularly appreciates the quality of the Design and Access Statement (DAS) and the material that considered the possibility of the development of the surrounding land to the rear of the Old Brewery site. We found this an encouraging development. The Society:

- Strongly supports the redevelopment of the site with an intensified density.
- Supports any changes of use, the height and mass and design of the buildings that surround the northern courtyard.
- Does not support the height and mass of the two residential The main hotel entrance will be level access from Newfoundland Circus. It is proposed that a layby is provided to the street frontage on Newfoundland Circus to provide a drop-off for passengers arriving by coach, with access for taxis and deliveries along Orange Street.
- The building has been designed to be 'accessible for all' with all public spaces, facilities and furniture being user friendly to all persons. 10 no: deluxe bedrooms are also included which have been designed as suitable to those with special access requirements.
- The existing walkway and right of way (between Orange Street and Newfoundland Circus) will be retained at ground floor level. Access to rear and back of house areas will be provided from Orange Street at the rear of the building. Servicetowers.

### **3 The Northern court yard and the new North Street perimeter buildings**

The Society welcomes the design of this part of the scheme that conserves and adapts the attractive former brewery buildings to give this part of the development a sense of character and place. The street elevations of the new perimeter buildings will integrate the development of the former brewery yards to enhance the character of the lower part of North Street.

### **4 The height and mass of the proposed two residential blocks**

#### **4.1 Visual impact assessment**

Buildings that are taller than the prevailing context require additional scrutiny. To aid the assessment of the current proposal to build an 8-floor South block and a 9-floor North block (floor numbers include the ground floor) the DAS refers to development discussions with council officers. The Society assumes that the towers would additionally support plant enclosures and PV panels. The officers' assessed that the site could handle the proposed height in relation to the setting of the historic buildings and nearby conservation area. The earlier scheme, to which the quoted comments relate, contained two towers of 6-floors which is not comparable to the built quantity of the revised design, the earlier comments and cannot assist the evaluation of the current scheme. The increased tower height of the revised scheme is well beyond incidental 'design creep'.

4.2 Although the impact of Towers of 8 and 9-floors on the views towards Ashton Court should be assessed the critical visual impact should be evaluated from street-level in the surrounding area. The ambient height of North Street gives it a pleasant, hospitable, human scale. The towers are significantly taller than the ambient height and would harm North Street's character, particularly looking westward. Council officers will not be assisted by the figure 5.19 at page 38 of Part 2 of the DAS which originates from an earlier lower tower proposal during pre-ap development. The taller buildings used to compare the towers of the current scheme are outside the visual neighbourhood of the Old Brewery. The BUDF told the applicant not to make these comparisons in their own pre-ap response [SCI Appendix 1 refers]. The Ashton and Bedminster 1970s residential tower blocks are also an unhelpful comparison. In the style of their time, they are surrounded by sterile open space. This development is integrated with a lower-rise building that uses the developable space intensively.

#### **4.3 Density**

The Society considered the density of the earlier pre-planning application scheme manageable although it had a higher density than the local average. The increased accommodation in the towers increases the management challenges. The site has relatively limited access. The additional number of residents with their visitors, deliveries and refuse will intensify the use of the site to disadvantage the future residents' quality of life. The Council will no doubt consider the number of dwellings per hectare for the whole of the Old Brewery site and for the denser sub-area of the residential blocks. The earlier pre-planning application scheme would have added a

significant contribution to Bristol's housing stock. An interesting and relevant comparison could be made between the proposed density of the earlier pre-planning application scheme, the current scheme and the density of the Ashton and Bedminster 1970s residential tower blocks to include that area of their landscapes.

#### 4.4 **Quality of life**

The proximity of the south tower to the north tower creates a need for careful consideration of the requirement that all flats in the north tower receive direct sunlight. The DAS draws attention to the increase in width of the courtyard between the towers. The Society is concerned that the ratio of the height increase of the towers greatly exceeds the ratio of the increase of the width of the courtyard that separates the towers.

There will be overlooking/loss of privacy issues that will affect the residential properties and their gardens to the south of the site and will harm the quality of life of their residents. The towers would be quite close to each other which will raise similar issues within the development.

#### 4.5 **Environmental impact**

The Society is surprised that the shadowing diagram relates only to mid-summer. It is custom and practice for the shadow diagram to illustrate shadow at the solstices and at mid-winter. The Society is concerned about the effect of the prevailing south-west wind on the courtyard. The long-sides of the towers are aligned east-west which would funnel the wind into the shared amenity space. The courtyard between the blocks is likely to be a shaded and hostile place for much of the year and, as a result, would not contribute positively to the amenity space for the residents. The Society is not convinced by the drawings. The shadows that the towers will create will affect the neighbouring potential development plots to the rear of the Old Brewery site.

#### 5 **Design and materials of the two residential blocks**

Subject to the objection to the height of the residential towers the Society supports their design aesthetic and the proposed elevation materials which is sympathetic to the character of the retained brewery buildings.

#### 6 **Conclusion**

6.1 The Society welcomes this proposal that includes constructive suggestions for the development of neighbouring plots to the rear of the Old Brewery site to provide additional residential development but regrets that the previously mooted Baynton Road to Durnford Street pedestrian link has been lost.

6.2 The Society does not support the proposed height of the two tall residential blocks. Despite the setting of the towers in the centre of the site the revised height would dominate the lower end of North Street. The towers would also overbear and overlook the potential lower rise residential development to the rear of the Old Brewery site, which is apparent from some of the diagrams in the DAS. The amplified height of the towers in the earlier scheme would have produced a residential density well above the population density of the surrounding area. The earlier scheme represented efficient land use and, the Society assumes, a viable development. The

augmentation of the population represented by the additional residential floors would overdevelop this constrained site to the detriment of the future occupants. The height and proximity of the south tower to the north tower causes the Society to question the access to sun light to the occupants of the lower floors of the north tower and the comfort of the overshadowed and probably wind-swept amenity space of the podium between the towers as well as any reach of these effects beyond the site boundaries.

- 6.3 Officers will have to assess the proposal on its merits, but. Ideally, the Council should work towards an optimum density for the proposal site and its neighbour and conclude that increase in the height of the development above six storeys is unnecessary.